UNITED NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/47/255
3 June 1992
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: ARABIC

Forty-seventh session
Item 73 of the preliminary list*

UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST

Letter dated 3 June 1992 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith the statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic concerning Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Syrian Arab citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan area submitted to the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories during its visit to the Syrian Arab Republic from 31 April to 1 May 1992.

I should be grateful if you would have this statement circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under item 73 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Issa AWAD
Minister Plenipotentiary
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

* A/47/50.

ANNEX

Statement issued by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic and submitted to the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories during 1991

The Israeli authorities are continuing their flagrant and deliberate violation of the norms of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1965 and other international instruments. They have also continued to flout the resolutions of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the relevant specialized agencies and to defy the international community and world public opinion, whether in occupied Palestine, the Syrian Arab Golan or southern Lebanon.

Israel persists in its claim that the Golan Heights are part of the territory of so-called "Greater Israel" and aims at erasing the Syrian Arab identity of both the territory and the Syrian Arab inhabitants of the occupied Golan. The Israeli authorities have continued to follow their repressive policy against those Syrian Arab inhabitants who have remained in their five occupied villages (Majdal Shams, Buq'ata, Ayn Qunyah, Mas'adah and Al-Fajr) in spite of repression by the occupation authorities, their confiscation of freedoms and property and other inhumane practices contrary to all international laws and customs relating to human rights.

The Israeli authorities have continued to follow this policy at the same time as thousands of new Jewish immigrants have been brought into Israel to settle in the occupied Golan, providing them with all the rights denied to the indigenous inhabitants of the Golan with regard to life in their occupied homeland. As compared with deprivation of most health and education services and the vast neglect and deterioration in the area of public service facilities throughout the villages of the occupied Syrian Golan, the Israeli authorities are spending millions of dollars on the construction of new settlements in the Golan and the improvement of conditions in the old settlements, in order to induce new foreign Jewish immigrants, absolute strangers to this region, to go and settle there. The Syrian inhabitants of the occupied Golan are not permitted to make any protest against the usurpation of their land as it is stolen from them and given to foreigners without restriction or condition.

The citizens of the Golan have suffered and continue to suffer many kinds of oppression and repression aimed at obliterating the Syrian identity by force, from the occupation of their land by aggression in 1967 to the adoption of the annexation decision in 1981, the ensuing attempt to impose Israeli

identity cards on them and the brutal repression to which they have been subjected since the beginning of the Palestinian intifadah and the escalation of their resistance to Israeli occupation. With the increase in the fresh waves of Jewish immigration, the acts of repression and oppression against them have increased considerably in order to prevent any increased scope for their rejection of and protest against the settlement of the new immigrants on their land.

The kinds of suffering and oppression to which the Arabs of the occupied Syrian Golan were subjected during 1991 and which have continued during the current year are many and horrendous. It is expected that they will continue until the hold of occupation is eventually removed. They are set forth in the various sections of this statement.

I. Policy of annexation and settlement

In accordance with the above and as we have shown in our earlier reports on the occupied Arab territories, the Israeli occupation authorities were quick to reveal their expansionist intentions regarding the occupied Golan Heights. They promulgated Act. No. 14 of 1981, declaring the annexation of the occupied Golan Heights to the Israeli entity and the application of its legislation, judicial and administrative systems to it, in contravention of the provisions of international instruments and legislation, in particular, the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and under occupation. The Convention makes it incumbent on the occupying State to continue the application of the national laws and regulations of the areas under occupation and not to infringe on their national identity or introduce alien human groups to be settled in such areas.

The truth is that the Israeli authorities harboured the intention of occupying and annexing the Golan Heights, and did so when the occasion presented itself, because of the strategic importance of the Golan as a strategic base for launching acts of aggression against Syria should an opportunity arise in the future. Accordingly, we have found that the leaders of the Israeli entity have affirmed and continue to affirm at various stages and on various occasions their intentions not to withdraw from the occupied Golan Heights.

Israel's expansionist intentions in this regard have been corroborated, since the beginning of its aggressive military operations on 5 June 1967, by its extremely harsh strikes against civilians and residential areas in the Golan, which have forced the civilian inhabitants of the Heights to collective flight from their homes and villages. No inhabitants remain there except in the village of Majdal Shams and four other small villages that still resist the Israeli occupation heroically in spite of their scant population.

The United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 497 (1981), condemning Israel's decision to annex the Golan, deeming it null and void and

without international legal effect. However, in spite of the Security Council resolution, which represents international legitimacy, Israel still refuses to implement it or be bound by it. In addition, it is acting swiftly to build Jewish settlements in the Golan and to channel new immigrants to settle there. However, the Syrian Arab inhabitants of the Golan villages are heroically continuing their struggle against Israeli occupation, holding fast to their land and the rights guaranteed them by international law.

In addition to what we have mentioned in our previous reports, we give below the facts relating to the situation in the occupied Golan Heights and the policy of the Israeli authorities in respect of Jewish settlement there during 1991 as relayed by the Israeli press. The Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz stated as follows: "The organizational plan of population distribution in Israel in the light of data on new immigration and anticipated immigration during the next few years is concerned with action to increase the number of Jewish settlers in the Golan to 30,000" (Ha'aretz, 8 January 1991). According to the Jerusalem Post for 10 March 1991, the officials of Israeli settlements in the Golan Heights asked the Likud Party not to relinquish the Golan Heights, and settlers' concern about the future of the Golan increased following the statements made by United States leaders against the backdrop of the Gulf War. The president of the local council at the Katzrin settlement, Sami Bar-Lev, said: "Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir promises, in a letter sent recently to the heads of Jewish settlements in the Golan, that the Golan will not change and will remain a part of Israel" (Jerusalem Post, 10 March 1991).

Knesset Speaker Dov Shilansky said during his visit to the Golan Heights: "Israel will not in any way relinquish the Golan Heights. There is no legal possibility of discussing the question of returning the Golan to Syria. That is in accordance with the application of Israeli law to the Golan under a Knesset decision 10 years ago" (Ha'aretz, 10 March 1991).

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee that there was no change in Israel's position on the Golan Heights and that they would not think of rescinding the 1981 law that states that the Golan Heights is a part of Israel. The number of its inhabitants would shortly be increased to approximately 20,000 following the construction of 1,200 housing units to absorb more immigrants there (Ha'aretz, 19 March 1991).

Lieutenant General Dan Shomron, the Israeli Chief of Staff, when bidding farewell to the Northern Command on the occasion of the approaching end of his service in the Israeli army said: "The Golan is extremely important for Israel. When we are confronting an army or a State with which we are in a state of war, this region is extremely important for us" (Ha'aretz, 25 March 1991).

If Dan Shomron wants to keep the Golan for military reasons, the extremists in the Zionist parties intend to keep it for expansionist reasons. Ben-Horen, who has given himself the nickname of "Chief of Judah", said that

his supporters in the Golan were being organized to resist any attempt aimed at returning the Golan to Syria. Ben-Horen, who is one of the leaders of the Kach movement said that he would shortly return to the Golan to take action there against any attempt at any relinquishment of the Golan (Ha'aretz, 22 March 1991).

A United States Administration report estimates the number of Jews in the Golan Heights at approximately 12,000 (Ha'aretz, 27 February 1991).

Reliable Israeli sources stated that in 1991 1,000 housing units would be erected in existing settlements in the occupied Golan (Ha'aretz, 22 April 1991).

With regard to Israeli investment in the Golan, the Minister of Agriculture announced the establishment of a compound for 1,000 milk cattle and a new dairy centre in the Golan Heights at a cost of $5 to $6 million (Ma'ariv, 1 May 1991).

A new settlement named Kanaf was inaugurated in the Golan Heights. The Minister of Housing, Ariel Sharon, was invited to the inaugural celebrations. The president of the regional council for Jewish settlements in the Golan, who was present at this inauguration, announced the establishment of two new settlements, one in the northern part of the Heights and one in the south (Ha'aretz, 21 May 1991).

That was for the purpose of housing 30 families, including new Jewish immigrant families. Minister of Housing Ariel Sharon said on 21 May 1991 during a tour of the Golan Heights that 400 new emigrants had settled in the Golan Heights recently and that it was intended to increase the number of Jewish settlers in the Golan from 12,000 at present to 25,000 in the future (Ma'ariv, 12 May 1991). He added, challenging the sentiments and the will of the Arabs of the occupied Golan: "Israel will send new settlers to the Golan as a part of Israel".

The newspaper Ha'aretz carried a statement by the Minister of Economics and Planning, David Magen, that in no way differs from those of other Israeli officials demonstrating their wish to continue extending Israeli hegemony over the Golan. In this statement, he said that the Golan is an inseparable part of Galilee and that the Government was currently preparing a draft law for submission to the Knesset for construction to develop Galilee, the Golan and the Negev (Ha'aretz, 2 July 1991).

The goals of Zionist occupation in the Golan are the same as in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with efforts to intensify settlement in order to Judaize these regions in their entirety. Sharon, the Minister of Housing expressed this as follows: "The creation of faits accomplis in the territory through the expansion of settlement in the Golan, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip will continue" (Ma'ariv, 25 July 1991).

The newspaper Ha'aretz referred to this official orientation in a news item which stated that the Government had requested a transfer in the amount of $15 million new shekels (NIS) for settlement in the Golan, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Ha'aretz, 23 July 1991).

The newspaper Yediot Aharonot said: "The Ministry of Housing has resumed building in the Golan following a halt due to budgetary difficulties. The construction of 3,200 housing units will shortly be completed. There is an additional programme for the construction of four settlements in the Golan: two at Berovim and Agon have been approved by the Ministerial Committee for Settlement, and the two others will be put to the Ministerial Committee for Settlement shortly" (Yediat Aharonot, 25 July 1991).

With regard to the expansion of settlement in the Golan, the newspaper Davar published a report on 4 September 1991 that said "Twenty-four new immigrant families from the Soviet Union are ready to move soon to the Ke'la Qal' Golan settlement in the northern Golan.

Yehuda Fillman, President of the local council for the Golan said that the above-mentioned families would go to the Bruchim settlement centre in the northern Golan. He explained that a study would be made of a project for establishing two new settlements in the Golan near Lake Tiberias and said that it should be noted that, during the first half of 1991, agricultural settlements in the Golan had absorbed 120 Jewish immigrant families and that Katzrin alone had absorbed 160 families. The number of Jewish settlers in the Golan up to the beginning of September 1991 had totalled 11,500, an increase of 1,500 over the past three years. That was confirmed by Yehuda Fillman mentioned above (Davar, 4 September 1991).

The Minister of Economics and Planning, David Magen, announced on 7 October 1991 that a start had been made on the operation of building approximately 1,482 housing units in the Golan, out of the 3,000 units scheduled for construction in 1991, 1,800 in Katzrin settlement and the rest in fertile agricultural locations in the Heights. The Golan settlements were attached for administrative purposes to the local council for settlements in Galilee (Davar, 8 October 1991).

The newspapaer Ha'aretz said with regard to the settlement of immigrants in the Golan: "A group of new immigrants from the Soviet Union have settled in the northern part of the Golan Heights in the Qal' Golan settlement occupying housing used by the army until a few days ago" (Ha'aretz, 15 October 1991).

With regard to settlers' defiance of peace efforts, Ha'aretz reported on 22 October 1991 that a group of settlers in the Golan Heights had established at least one new settlement post in the Golan Heights on the eve of the convening of the Madrid Peace Conference (Ha'aretz, 23 October 1991).

Ha'aretz also stated that it had been decided that some ministers,

Knesset members and many other personalities were to participate in the inaugural ceremony of the Berokhim settlement in the Golan Heights. The ceremony would be held at the Ke'la settlement in the northern Golan. Ministers Sharon, Eitan and Ne'eman had announced that they would participate in the ceremonies (Ha'aretz, 4 November 1991).

The Zionist settlement goals in the Golan are the same as in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. All the occupied Arab areas are the target of settlement and Judaization. Knesset member Haim Oron (Mapam) and Dedi Zucker (Ratz) revealed that the Ministry of Construction and Housing would spend NIS 864 million on the construction of 5,400 new housing units in the occupied areas during 1992, with approximately 4,650 housing units to be built in the West Bank, 280 in the Gaza Strip and 470 in the Golan Heights (Yediot Aharonot, 11 November 1991).

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir expressed the expansionist Zionist viewpoint regarding the occupied Arab territories, as represented in the settlement policy. He said: "We shall continue settlement in the occupied areas because it meets our needs for water and bread" (Yediot Aharonot, 26 September 1991).

Indeed, Shamir does not even recognize the Green Line, i.e., the 1948 Armistice line between the Israeli entity, on the one hand, and the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan, on the other. He said, following the laying of the foundation-stone of the Torigal settlement: "As far as I am concerned, there is no such thing as the green line" (Ma'ariv, 24 September 1991).

While Israel officially declared its annexation of the Golan by Decision No. 14 of 1981, Yitzhak Shamir also considers that the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are an inseparable part of Israel. This means that Shamir intends to declare the annexation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip whenever circumstances are propitious. Shamir said before the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee on 24 June 1991 that he believed that the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were an inseparable part of Israel. "We shall struggle to render this belief a tangible reality" (Ma'ariv, Yediot Aharonot, 25 June 1991).

Thus we note that the Zionist expansionist view of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan is one and the same and that the circumstances of the occupation of the three areas are one and the same also; the expansionist settlement policy applies to them all.

Accordingly, the liberation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from Israeli occupation is linked to the liberation of the Golan. The endeavour to end this occupation must be characterized by unity and complementarity.

II. Economic matters

Unquestionably, the Golan Arabs are exposed to the worst kinds of economic injustice, oppression and exploitation. Israel's objective in this is to escalate the suffering in this vital public area, as demonstrated by the ongoing and persistent Israeli effort to weaken the spirit of resistance among Arab citizens in the Golan by destroying the foundations of their simple and modest local economy.

This Israeli warfare at the economic level against the Golan Arabs is seen in a number of practices and phenomena, the following being the main ones:

1. The strengthening of restrictions on the marketing of agricultural crops and produce, particularly the apple crop, which is one of the sources of livelihood of the Golan Arabs. These restrictions take the form of the many obstacles placed by the occupation authorities on bringing Golan apples to the markets of the occupied West Bank or even to Israeli markets.

Nor do the occupation authorities hesitate to destroy apple and other agricultural crops in the Golan in order to deprive the Arabs there of benefiting from the proceeds of marketing them, as a reprisal for protest actions against the practices of the occupiers. Naturally, 1991 was not free from this harsh type of practice. According to reports from the Golan, part of the Golan apple crop was spoiled because the authorities barred the owners from marketing it directly.

2. It is well known that the region as a whole has suffered in past years, including 1991, from a marked shortage of rainwater. This has, in turn, led to a shortage of the irrigation water required for arable land which depends on irrigation by spring and well water. The Israeli authorities, instead of desisting from their policy of continual reduction of the amount of irrigation water for Golan Arabs to water their summer crops and their trees, from whose produce they make a livelihood, continued that policy and deprived the Arab inhabitants finally of the water they need. They diverted it to the farmland of Jewish settlements there, heedless of the cries of protest and complaints made by the Golan Arabs to the occupation authorities. According to information from Arab inhabitants, the Israeli authorities have prohibited them from digging new wells during the past year and have blocked some of the wells dug earlier, as well as barring the inhabitants from other water sources. They have prevented them from using wells by cutting pipes laid from those sources to their orchards.

3. The occupation authorities were not satisfied with the shrinkage of arable land that resulted from the reduction of irrigation water in the villages of the occupied Golan. They have uprooted seedlings planted by Arab citizens and also many of the fruit-bearing trees planted earlier, on the grounds that the owners of the land on which they were planted had not obtained permits to plant them from the so-called "Israel Land Administration".

4. In the attempt to reduce the arable area, the occupation authorities have, from time to time in the villages of the occupied Golan, set large-scale fires over extensive areas of Arab orchards and in the wooded areas surrounding those villages in the form of natural reserves.

5. This is in addition to the burning of extensive areas of pastureland and woods so as to deprive the Golan Arabs of a major source of income, namely stockraising. The Golan Arabs deny the reports of the Israeli authorities that these fires were set by accident because of the negligence of some Jewish hikers. They affirm that all these fires were set for deliberate racist motives.

6. The setting of fires in Arab pasture areas is not all that is suffered by Arab herders in the Golan. There are also the mines set around pasturelands. These are anti-personnel mines that explode under the feet of Arab herdsmen, causing death or mutilation. The Israeli authorities do not notify them beforehand of where the mines are planted so that they can avoid them. The traditional excuse of the occupation authorities in justification of this inhumane practice is "security requirements".

7. In addition to the above, in the economic field there are the overwhelming taxes imposed by the occupation authorities on the Golan Arabs, in particular, the income tax on agricultural crops to restrict marketing. It is a tax totally out of proportion to the local income.

The Israeli tax authorities do not hesitate to confiscate the material assets of Arab inhabitants who are unable to pay the overwhelming taxes imposed on them. Confiscation sometimes extends to areas of arable land belonging to such inhabitants.

Unquestionably, the settling of new Jewish immigrants in the occupied Arab territory increases the volume of psychological coercion to which the Golan Arab inhabitants are subjected. They see resources of their land plundered and given to alien new Jewish immigrants who pour into this part of the occupied Arab territories with the open encouragement of the Government of Israel. Naturally, the impact of these settlement actions is not confined to the psychology of the Arab citizens here; these measures extend to all areas of their life and their subsistence.

Thus, the economic situation of those Arabs will deteriorate even further, particularly when a period of drought has overtaken the area, as in the last few years, in particular, 1991.

III. Health services

The five Syrian Arab villages (Majdal Shams, Mas'adah, Buq'ata, Al-Fajr and Ayn Qunyah) still lack any health facilities or centres (no hospitals, clinics or even surgeries or, especially, pharmacies). Citizens are obliged to travel to distant hospitals in Nazareth, Safad and the West Bank for

treatment despite having to pay exorbitant taxes for so-called "health insurance" and increased persecution. The occupation authorities refuse to allow Syrian nationals in the Golan to travel out of the area for treatment unless they obtain an official departure permit stamped and signed by the area's Military Governor. Dozens of requests have been submitted to the Israeli military authorities seeking permission for citizens to obtain treatment in the Syrian Arab Republic, but the authorities approve or reject the requests at their own discretion.

While the Arabs of the occupied Golan suffer an overall deterioration of their living conditions as a result of the neglect, harassment and repression meted out to them by the Israeli authorities, the authorities prevent the Syrian population of the Golan from establishing their own private clinic or a school for their children, even at their own expense, and yet spend millions of dollars to boost tourism in the Golan.

In this connection, sources at the Israeli Government commercial corporation report that the corporation intends to invest some $5 million for the development of tourist sites in the Golan in early 1992. This amount is equivalent to double the level of such investment in the Golan over the past 10 years.

IV. Education

Ever since the occupation began 25 years ago, Israel has continued to violate the national culture of Syrian Arab citizens of the Golan. It has eliminated Syrian Arab curricula from the schools, adopted Israeli curricula in their place and imposed them on students. It is hostile to the population's national and spiritual heritage, and the occupation authorities consistently expel competent teachers and replace them with incompetent substitutes loyal to the authorities, thus causing a decline in the level of education and culture among the people of the Golan. There is also a great shortage of classrooms, with students crammed into houses and garages which had been converted into makeshift classes but lack the most basic hygiene requirements for the conduct of education. Reports indicate that the situation of secondary school certificate-holders is lamentable because the enemy authorities are preventing all but a few of them from pursuing their studies at Israel's universities (and even those few Golan students are accepted only after enormous efforts and much intervention). Between 150 and 200 students graduate from secondary schools in the Golan each year.

V. Taxation and earnings

Taxation in the area is continually on the rise. For example, each metre of construction is taxed at a rate of NIS 9, instead of NIS 7 last year. One United States dollar is equivalent to NIS 2.5. Very high fines are also imposed, the aim being to overburden the Syrian population of the Golan and make it impossible for them to pay their taxes. Their property is subject to seizure and they themselves are subject to detention. By way of example, the

youth Ra'fat Muhanna Sa'b was detained while driving his father's tractor without a driving licence: he was stopped and taken to court, where he was fined NIS 1,200 (i.e., approximately $500) before being released. The tractor was confiscated for a period of four months.

Taxes are levied on land, construction, commercial premises and all services, in addition to taxes on labour and production at a rate of 15 per cent.

The excessive increase in the level of taxation on the Arab population of the occupied Syrian heights, together with the enemy authorities' encroachment on their production and undermining of their economy, are designed to weaken the population's resistance and force them to submit to the will of the occupation.

VI. Services

Neglect and deterioration in this sphere are evident in many ways, e.g., deliberate neglect of the road network linking the five occupied villages, as well as the drinking water, sewage and electricity systems and other public service facilities. Arab residents of the Golan confirm that there has been no noticeable improvement in these facilities during 1991.

VII. Israeli environmental practices

The Golan Heights are located in the south-west of Syria and constitute the link between Syria and three neighbouring countries (Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan).

Quneitra covers an area of 1,860 square kilometres and is noted for its varied climate and agriculture. The highest point in the area is at 2,814 metres above sea level, compared with the lowest point - 60 kilometres away - at 218 metres above sea level.

The region is principally noted for its copious water resources, fertile soil, abundant pasture and many wells. Before 1967 it had a population of 153,000, with the population of Quneitra at that time standing at 53,000.

In pursuit of its aggressive settlement policy, Israel launched its treacherous attack on the Arab world in 1967, resulting in the occupation of most of the Golan until June 1974, when the city of Quneitra and many of the region's villages were liberated.

From the very beginning of the occupation, Israel was guilty of acts of inhumanity against defenceless citizens, subjecting them to the most abhorrent forms of repression and terrorism, forcing them to leave their land and destroying 147 towns and villages during the occupation. A few days before its withdrawal from Quneitra, it deliberately razed the town to the ground, using bulldozers, earth-movers and explosives.

It also burned down trees and woods in order to destroy the city's wealth of natural resources. Some 20,000 Syrian nationals are still living under the occupation and remain subject to the vilest forms of repression and terrorism. Their land and crops are confiscated; they are denied the opportunity of studying at universities; exorbitant taxes are imposed on them; curfews limit travel between different villages and even within the same village; and they are denied the opportunity to obtain social security and civil protection.

The Israeli authorities are still conducting explosions and expansion activities with a view to establishing additional military facilities. According to the latest statistics, the number of facilities destroyed amounts to some 15,000 installations, residential buildings, hospitals and schools, turning the residents of these areas into environmental refugees.

In accordance with the principles of international law governing the environment, particularly those emanating from the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held at Stockholm in 1972, and the World Charter for Nature, adopted by the General Assembly in 1982, recalling United Nations Environment Programme Governing Council decisions 14/11 and 15/8 concerning the environmental situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, the occupied Syrian Golan and other occupied Arab territories, with reference to the related resolutions of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and in affirmation of mankind's fundamental human right to enjoy a healthy environment free of pollution, we may list the following brutal practices by the Israeli occupation authorities, which include the expropriation of land and water resources, the destruction of homes, the forcing of Arab nationals into exile and the construction of new settlements:

1. Israel's use of nuclear reactors represents the greatest overall danger to the environment in the Middle East region by virtue of the radiation they emit. The waste they produce also constitutes a great danger to the environment in the Mediterranean region.

2. Israel's secret use of chemical and biological weapon factories, together with its disposal of waste in the areas under its military occupation, present a threat to human life and the environment.

3. The destruction of the region's natural resources contributes to a real deterioration at all levels in view of the essential link between environmental, economic, social and population-related aspects of existence.

As is well known, water, trees and the air constitute the essential foundations for the establishment and preservation of an exemplary natural environment. The following facts should be mentioned in this connection:

(a) Water

The occupation authorities are seizing water and diverting sources to land inside Zionist settlements, thus aggravating the environmental situation on the Arab side and increasing the area of swamps and the spread of mosquitoes and epidemics in the occupied territories, as well as degrading the soil.

The occupation authorities have confiscated the waters of Al-Ya'furi - Al-Mushayrifah - Ra's Abu Sa'd in the Golan region and diverted them to Israeli settlements, causing a fall in the water level and an increase in the salinity of Lake Tiberias, to the extent that it is no longer good for agricultural use or for any purpose other than the fulfilment of Israeli objectives, including depriving the Arabs of any use or benefit from it for their lives and their environment.

The occupation authorities are diverting the waters of the Litani and the Hasbani to the occupied areas of southern Lebanon and discharging waste into watersheds leading to the Mediterranean, thus destroying the sea's fishing resources. As a result of the prevailing south-westerly winds and sea currents, the effect is felt all along the Syrian and Lebanese coasts, thus ruining the area's environment in flagrant violation of all international legal and moral principles and values.

The occupation authorities' aim is clear, namely, to drive out the population and portray the Arab territories as devoid of any life.

(b) Trees

1. Trees are essential for the preservation and purification of the environment. The continued existence of natural forests depends on constant care and conservation. The occupation authorities, of course, deliberately avoid providing such care and, for example, spray trees and forests with poisonous insecticides which lead to the death of the trees themselves, livestock and other flora and fauna.

2. They burn the green foliage in border areas, including natural forests, the intention being to expose such areas and prevent infiltration or attack by rebels or elements resisting occupation activities.

3. They spray fruit-bearing trees, and particularly the apple trees for which the Golan region is famous, with special insecticides which kill bees and certain other insects, thus preventing the population from producing or consuming honey and destroying this living natural resource.

4. They spray poisonous insecticides on pastures in order to prevent the population from grazing their livestock. Thus, they will have destroyed trees and animal resources at the same time, all for the purpose of taking over and annexing the land.

5. They cut down trees growing in the wild on the grounds that they are reclaiming land and expanding its arable area, though the purpose is to establish Jewish settlements and additional camps.

6. The occupation authorities are putting poisonous insecticides into the Golan population's water tanks, particularly those used for the irrigation of summer crops and fruit trees, with the intention of destroying the crops, withering the fruit trees and eliminating the agricultural production and sources of sustenance of the Arab population.

7. Waste is buried in the occupied territories and areas in which the population is concentrated, leading to the spread of epidemics and diseases among them.

8. While citing security reasons, they are doing real damage to the environment and changing the features of the land, thus violating international resolutions, including Sub-commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities resolution 1989/108, concerning man and the environment, and resolution 1989/39, concerning respect for the right to life. When Israel violates these two resolutions, it is creating harsh environmental conditions which make it difficult for the Arab population to endure such hardship and miserable standards of living. This in turn induces them to migrate, thus fulfilling Israel's objectives of emptying the area of its population and achieving its full annexation to the Israeli settlements.

VIII. Repression, oppression and suppression of freedoms

The Israeli occupation authorities indulge in practices incompatible with the most basic human rights against the Syrian Arab population of the occupied Golan. The life of Arab residents of the Golan is becoming harsher and gloomier each day as they suffer the blows of repression, oppression and the suppression of individual and collective freedoms. The general level of subjugation, disregard for human dignity and grave injustice may be seen in the arbitrary pronouncement of sentences to long or short terms of imprisonment for anyone who makes any protest against such oppression and injustice. Further evidence is provided by the fact that Arab residents of the Golan have, since the occupation in 1967, been weighed down by the yoke of emergency legislation and almost total subjugation to the Israeli Military Governor in the Golan. The Military Governor is empowered to impose a local curfew on the population of the area whenever he sees fit, for as long as he sees fit and for whatever reason. In addition, he may impose house arrest on whomsoever he wishes and issue orders for the detention of suspects. Other repressive practices include vicious beating, the firing on occasion of live bullets against demonstrators, raids on homes and schools, detention and imprisonment for the paltriest of reasons, as well as other practices which have become an alarming reality for citizens of the Golan on a daily basis since 1967. The situation has not improved at all in 1991, as is demonstrated by the following incidents:

On 7 February 1991, the occupation authorities arrested six citizens in the village of Majdal Shams simply for declaring that the occupation was illegal and ran counter to international law.

The newspaper Ha'aretz reported on the struggle against the Israeli occupation by Arab villagers in the Golan as follows: "Hundreds of members of the police and Border Police were deployed in the occupied Arab villages of the Golan to prevent the population engaging in demonstrations or acts of protest on the ninth anniversary of the compulsory distribution of Israeli identity cards to the area's Arab population, with a view to severing their affiliation to the nation of Syria and as a precaution against any demonstration. Yesterday, the Israeli police arrested five citizens from the occupied village of Majdal Shams on the grounds that they had encouraged the Arab population there to demonstrate against the occupation. With the arrest of these five individuals, the number of Arab citizens arrested by the occupation authorities in recent days rises to 12" (Ha'aretz, 10 February 1991).

They were all charged with the same offence as before. Also on that night and on previous nights, there were a number of raids on the homes of youths in other occupied villages of the Golan. Members of the police and Border Police were deployed with full military equipment along the roads linking the five occupied villages. It will be recalled that the Israeli occupation authorities had nine years earlier cancelled the Syrian Arab identity cards of Golan residents and replaced them with Israeli identity cards: the population rejected this measure and have fought against it ever since.

The newspaper Ma'ariv carried a report which demonstrates the resilience of patriotic sentiments among young Syrian Arab citizens of the Golan, as follows: "The local court at Nazareth yesterday handed down a suspended sentence of three years' imprisonment to two youths from the village of Majdal Shams in the Golan Heights following their conviction for cooperating with the Syrian authorities" (Ma'ariv, 4 March 1991).

There is no doubt that the continued vigilance of national sentiments in the villages of the Golan is a natural patriotic reaction to the determination of Israeli officials and Jewish settlers to impose a Zionist presence in the Golan Heights and to force a Zionist identity on the region under the shadow of the Israeli occupation. The Israeli press carries statements every day by Zionist officials and settlers affirming this aggressive and expansionist inclination.

On 13 February 1991, five citizens from Majdal Shams were arrested on charges of throwing stones at an Israeli patrol.

On 14 February 1991, a curfew was clamped on the villages of Majdal Shams, Mas'adah, Buq'ata and Ayn Qunyah to prevent citizens from celebrating the ninth anniversary of the general strike against the attempted imposition

of Israeli identity and the imposition of Israeli laws in the Golan (the annexation decision) on 14 December 1981.

On 18 February 1991, the enemy authorities arrested two minors in Majdal Shams on charges of writing slogans denouncing the occupation. On 17 April 1991, the anniversary of Syria's Independence Day, the occupation authorities imposed a curfew to prevent Syrian residents of the Golan from celebrating this national event. The occupation authorities also took other so-called "security measures" on the eve of the occasion, including the deployment of patrols and the erection of barriers on roads between the occupied villages. Neither these nor other measures were of any use in preventing the Arab population from celebrating this patriotic anniversary.

Reports from residents in the area confirm that the Israeli authorities have not desisted from their attempt to impose compulsory conscription into the army occupying their territory for Arab youths in the Golan. Because these youths have insisted on preserving their national dignity by refusing orders to serve in the Israeli army, many of them have been subjected to arrest, prosecution, harassment in terms of employment opportunities and other inhumane practices.

Among the accusations concocted by the occupation authorities against Arab youths in the Golan who refuse to serve in the Israeli army is that of cooperating with their own nation's authorities. The local court in Nazareth sentenced two youths from the village of Majdal Shams, Faris al-Sha'ir and Bassam Sulayman, to 10 years, including eight years of actual imprisonment, on this false charge in early April 1991 (Ma'ariv, 8 April 1991).

On 21 May 1991, the Israeli occupation authorities stepped up security to protect Israeli Housing Minister Ariel Sharon, who had decided to visit the village of Majdal Shams and other occupied villages in order to greet his affirmation of the sites of new Israeli settlements scheduled for establishment in the occupied Golan. When the Israeli authorities saw that the population intended to protest and demonstrate against the visit and against settlement activities in their territory in general, they were obliged to step up the level of their repression by indulging in further inhumane practices, as confirmed by reports from the area. They were expecting the village's population to greet Sharon in a way which would remind him of the reception accorded to Shimon Peres some years previously (Ma'ariv, 21 May 1991). On his visit to the village of Majdal Shams some years before, Shimon Peres had been met with noisy protest demonstrations involving violent confrontations between the police and villagers.

The same thing happened when a number of Israeli ministers, members of the Knesset and other important Government personalities announced their intention to visit the Golan on 4 November 1991 to participate in the inauguration of the Bruchim settlement. The ceremony did in fact take place at the Ke'la settlement (Qal' Golan) amid very intensive security measures.

On 11 September 1991, the enemy authorities arrested seven citizens in Majdal Shams and Mas'adah for singing national songs at weddings.

During the general strike in the Golan on 14 December 1991, citizens refused to go to work in protest against Israel's decision to annex the Golan on that date 10 years previously.

On 14 February 1992, there was a general strike in the Golan to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Syrian Arab population's strike against the occupation and imposition of Israeli identity on the population. The occupation authorities arrested a number of individuals in the village of Buq'ata on charges of writing anti-occupation slogans.

During January 1992, Golan citizens detained at Ashkelon prison were subjected to gas-grenade attacks by the occupation authorities inside their cells, together with other prisoners, because they had protested at severe overcrowding in the prison, which was filled to twice its capacity. A large number of prisoners were overcome by fumes and suffered various degrees of asphyxiation. They are undergoing different types of torture, and the hygiene conditions in the prison, where they are deprived of health care, are very poor. Similar events occurred in the summer of 1991, when the lack of even the most basic hygiene caused the spread of scabies and other diseases among them. They were not provided with the necessary health and medical care, or treatment and medicines, and the occupation authorities did not permit doctors from the occupied Golan into the prisons to treat and administer to them.

On Land Day, our people in the Golan were able to mark the occasion only by closing their shops. The enemy authorities deployed additional forces in the village of Mas'adah.

The Israeli authorities have for some time been trying to purchase a 20-dunum plot of land belonging to Muhsin Abu Salih in Mas'adah. He refused to sell it to the enemy authorities because they wished to purchase the land for expansionist purposes, to establish a kibbutz there. When they prevented him from grazing his cattle, he was forced to sell it to them at half the real price.